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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 24 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Humanitarian cooperation between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations in accordance with Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)

On instructions from my Government, I wish to transmit the following information:

Since the outset of the crisis in Syria, humanitarian needs have grown and gained prominence as terrorism has escalated. Armed terrorist groups have entered and occupied densely populated regions, villages and urban areas. They have spread panic and terror among the population, which they have forcibly detained as human shields. They have secured and destroyed public facilities and State service providers, preventing the local population from accessing basic services. In view of that situation, and in the light of its constitutional responsibilities and its duty to protect its citizens, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has endeavoured to restore security and stability throughout the national territory and provide basic services for its citizens.

The armed terrorist groups have deliberately, systematically and extensively sabotaged the country's infrastructure and public service institutions. In addition, the unilateral measures imposed by certain States have affected the living conditions of Syrian civilians. As a result, humanitarian needs have expanded even as the capacity to respond has been stretched. Since 2012, the Syrian Government has therefore been working with the United Nations and other international humanitarian organizations, formulating a succession of plans to respond to humanitarian needs in Syria. The most recent is the 2014 response plan, which was agreed a few months ago.

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The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is convinced that the humanitarian crisis that has emerged in many parts of Syria cannot be tackled solely by providing emergency supplies for the population. Rather, it is essential to address the roots of the problem and its escalation. First and foremost, that means combating and eradicating foreign-backed terrorism in order to protect civilians from terrorist crimes, which have indiscriminately claimed a growing number of Syrian lives, and to restore safety, stability and normality. It is also important to rescind the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States of America, its allies in the European Union and certain Arab States. Those measures have had a negative impact on the living conditions of Syrian civilians, impeding the delivery of such basic needs as food, medicine, medical supplies and basic services.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic therefore welcomed the contents of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014) concerning the humanitarian situation in Syria. The resolution refers plainly to the need to combat and eradicate terrorism. In so doing, it clearly recognizes the connection between the emergence and growth of humanitarian needs and the crimes of the armed terrorist groups. In a statement issued on 23 February 2014, the Government affirmed that it would continue to cooperate with the United Nations in order to provide and deliver humanitarian aid to those affected by the crisis in all governorates of Syria without distinction. It stressed its readiness to cooperate with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and with international humanitarian organizations active in Syria in order to determine mechanisms to implement the resolution based on respect for the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the guiding principles of United Nations humanitarian assistance in emergency situations, particularly respect for national sovereignty and the role of the State in supervising the distribution of humanitarian assistance in its territory.

Below is an overview of the cooperation in place between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations, and the steps that have been taken in that context.

I. Establishment of a joint Government-United Nations committee

In accordance with the Syrian official statement, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and the United Nations Resident Coordinator met at the Ministry on 2 March 2014 and agreed to establish a joint Government-United Nations committee to formulate and approve a cooperation mechanism. The committee has met four times for guidance and operational purposes on 7, 10, 17 and 20 March 2014 respectively. It held in-depth discussions to identify those areas in which aid delivery faces particular difficulties and obstacles, and to determine the priorities in securing access. The committee agreed to plan aid convoys to those areas jointly; to identify civilians' needs and the means for their direct delivery; and to examine reports on implementation, access routes and entry points. Such action would avoid the problems that have affected aid convoys in certain areas, such as the abduction of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) personnel in Idlib governorate, which was caused by failure to coordinate with the Government or to follow the safe routes that the Government had suggested.

II. Access to the areas referenced in the Security Council resolution

1. Mu'addamiyat al-Sham

The Syrian Government requested the deployment of humanitarian assistance in cooperation with the United Nations to Mu'addamiyah and Adra al-'Ummaliyah. On 25 February 2014, the office of the Resident Coordinator stated in writing that the United Nations was prepared to deploy a joint inter-agency aid convoy to Mu'addamiyah. On 27 February 2014, the Syrian Government informed the United Nations of its agreement for the convoy to enter Mu'addamiyah on Sunday, 2 March 2014. However, on the agreed date, the United Nations refrained from deploying the convoy and, by memorandum of the same day, requested a delay in responding to the appeal of the population of Mu'addamiyah. On 18 March 2014, a United Nations convoy crossed the last military checkpoint, bringing humanitarian aid into Mu'addamiyah for direct distribution to the local population in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The Syrian Government did everything necessary to facilitate its entry, but the convoy withdrew after being blocked by a number of local inhabitants. A local dignitary said that the people refused to accept the United Nations aid. In short, the Syrian Government has twice agreed to the deployment of the aid, on 2 and 17 March 2014 respectively; but the United Nations has been unable to deliver it owing to the stance of the population in Mu'addamiyah.

2. Adra al-'Ummaliyah

Although the Syrian Government gave its written approval to the Resident Coordinator on 11 and 13 March 2014, the United Nations has been unable to deliver aid to Adra al-'Ummaliyah. It made three attempts, on 11, 12 and 13 March 2014 respectively, but could not gain the agreement of the armed groups active in the area. The office of the Resident Coordinator stated that it had been unable to obtain the other side's approval for the entry of aid to Adra al-'Ummaliyah or Adra al-Balad. By memorandum of 13 March 2014, it requested that aid delivery should be postponed until such a time as the United Nations could ensure coordination with all parties.

3. Eastern Ghutah

In memorandums addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates on 27 February 2014, the United Nations sought agreement for aid convoys to Duma, Nashabiyah and Mulayhah in the eastern Ghutah. The office of the Resident Coordinator then requested, by memorandum of 2 March 2014, that the field visits to those areas should be postponed until the period from 13 to 20 March 2014 to allow for preparations to deploy convoys to Mu'addamiyah and Adra al-'Ummaliyah. The Syrian Government responded by memorandum of 12 March 2014 that the delivery of aid to those areas would need to be planned by the joint committee, in accordance with the agreement between the sides. On 16 May 2014, the Government notified the office of the Resident Coordinator that it approved the deployment of humanitarian aid to Duma town, in the eastern Ghutah, from 17 March 2014, on the understanding that the joint committee would be involved in identifying needs and access routes and determining how the United Nations and the Red Crescent would supervise the direct distribution of aid. On 19 March 2014, the United Nations again sought approval for the deployment of an aid convoy to Duma town on 20 March. The Syrian Government agreed by memorandum of 19 March.

Pursuant to that agreement, the United Nations has informed us that it has deployed a convoy of aid, vaccines and milk for children to Duma on 20 March, and that it has distributed those goods in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

Efforts towards national reconciliation have proved successful in various parts of the eastern Ghutah. As a result, it has been possible to deliver aid to those areas, the population has been able to return, and State institutions have been restored. The latter have worked to rebuild the damaged infrastructure and public service networks in the region. The most significant areas in which national reconciliation has been successful and the population has returned are Bab Bila, Bayt Saham and Yalda. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered and handed out aid packages to 6,200 people on 19 February and to 12,000 people over four successive days from 23 February. The Red Crescent used mobile surgeries to dispense medical aid. Reconciliation has also allowed a return to normality; the inhabitants' needs have been met, and they have been able to return safely to their homes. That situation shows that humanitarian needs are reduced, and the obstacles to humanitarian aid disappear, as soon as the terrorist threat recedes.

A joint team of United Nations entities brought humanitarian aid to the town of Jadidat al-Shaybani, in Rif Dimashq, on 16 January 2014 and to the town of Ghizlaniyah, also in Rif Dimashq, on 18 January 2014.

4. Nubul and Zahra

The Syrian Government has repeatedly asked the United Nations to deliver emergency humanitarian aid to the towns of Nubul and Zahra, whose population has been under a merciless siege for over 600 days without access to food, medicine or any basic needs. In order to reaffirm those previous requests, on 2 March 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates sent a memorandum to the office of the Resident Coordinator requesting the delivery of aid to the two towns rapidly and as a matter of priority. Despite the current discussions, the United Nations has yet to do so. At the meeting of the joint committee on 17 March 2014, the Syrian Government agreed to the distribution of humanitarian aid to several villages in which armed terrorist groups are present, on the road to Nubul and Zahra, and approved a route to those locations from inside the city of Aleppo.

5. Yarmouk camp

During the period from 18 January to 21 March 2014, a total of 8,464 aid packages have been delivered to Yarmouk camp, in addition to bread, dates and milk. 3,879 civilians in a serious medical condition have been evacuated along with their close relatives, as have 150 pupils and students who can now continue their studies at Syrian schools and universities. Between 28 February and 17 March 2014, the aid delivery and evacuations were interrupted because armed terrorist groups had returned to the camp and attacked its civilian inhabitants, keeping them away from the aid delivery area. From 1 March, several attempts to deliver the humanitarian aid were thwarted by armed groups. On 17 March, at the food aid distribution centre on Ramah Street in Yarmouk camp, they opened fire on representatives of the General Administration for Palestinian Arab Refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), after preventing civilians from reaching the location to receive aid and vaccinations and to evacuate the sick. A Palestine Red Crescent emergency vehicle attempted to drive

out of the camp to the delivery location, but it came under fire from terrorist snipers and gunmen. In the period from 19 to 21 March 2014 alone, despite coming under daily sniper fire and gunfire from the armed terrorist groups, UNRWA and the Palestine Red Crescent were able to bring 1,215 food packages and vaccinations and milk for children into the camp, and to evacuate 65 individuals in a serious medical condition. The Syrian Government continues to facilitate the delivery of aid and civilian needs to the camp in cooperation with the concerned Palestinian parties and UNRWA.

6. Old city of Homs

In Homs governorate, the Government authorities have worked with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the United Nations working group to evacuate 1,366 civilians from the old city of Homs from Friday, 7 February 2014, and to provide them immediately with emergency medical treatment and direct assistance. The evacuated civilians were taken to their chosen places of residence, in accordance with their wishes. Temporary places of residence were provided to 124 civilians. Food aid was delivered, although the aid convoy came under armed attack twice before reaching the old city of Homs.

7. Other problematic areas in which aid has been delivered and distributed

On 7 March 2014, in cooperation with United Nations entities, the Homs branch of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent deployed two convoys of emergency aid to Hulah and Shin in Homs governorate. On 12 March 2014, in cooperation with the International Committee of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Raqqah branch of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent arranged to receive a 24-truck convoy of emergency supplies. In February 2014, 3,500 food packages were delivered to Ariha and 3,500 to Salqin, both in Idlib governorate. Humanitarian supplies have been delivered to other areas where access is difficult. For instance, supplies were delivered to Basr al-Harir village in Dar'a governorate on 28 February 2014; to the Barzah district of Damascus governorate on 27 February 2014; and to Dayr al-Zawr city and the rural districts of Abu Kamal, Mayadin, the subdistrict of Mahasin and other locations on 27 February 2014.

III. Cross-border aid delivery

When the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates met with the Resident Coordinator on 18 November 2013, he notified him formally that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic agreed to the delivery of United Nations emergency and humanitarian supplies into Syrian territory through the official border crossings with neighbouring States. The supplies would then be distributed through the main United Nations offices in Damascus and the branch offices in the governorates. When the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates met with the Resident Coordinator on 4 March 2014, he said that the Syrian Government agreed that the United Nations could use the Nusaybin border crossing with Turkey to bring humanitarian aid into the country and respond to the needs of Hasakah governorate. The Ministry confirmed its approval to the United Nations in writing on 12 March 2014. The United Nations began bringing humanitarian aid into the city of Qamishli through the crossing on 20 March 2014.

The humanitarian crisis in Hasakah governorate has been exacerbated because armed terrorist groups have cut off the overland route from the governorates of Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqah, preventing the United Nations from transporting humanitarian aid to Hasakah. The Syrian Government has therefore agreed to airlift aid from Irbil in Iraq to Qamishli airport in Syria. To date, four airlifts have been organized, with over 12 flights per airlift. In total, some 50 flights have brought humanitarian aid to Qamishli airport in order to cover Hasakah governorate.

The United Nations has continued to deliver humanitarian assistance across the Lebanese border. In response to a memorandum of 19 March 2014 from the World Food Programme, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave its approval by memorandum of 20 March 2014 for the delivery of food aid across the Nasib border crossing with Jordan in order to cover Dar'a and Suwayda governorates.

The Syrian Government emphasizes that the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations active in Syria must respect Syria's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law.

IV. Expansion of humanitarian relief operations

1. Opening of United Nations branch offices in five Syrian governorates

In 2013, the Syrian Government informed the United Nations that it agreed to the opening of branch offices in Suwayda governorate (to cover the South), the city of Qamishli in Hasakah governorate (for the North-East) and in Aleppo (for the North). Approval had previously been given for United Nations branch offices in Homs (for the central region) and Tartus (for the coastal region). With those five branch offices and its main office in Damascus, the United Nations is now in a position to meet humanitarian needs in the entire Syrian Arab Republic.

2. Facilitation and clarification of visa issuance procedures

The Syrian Government has addressed the concerns raised by the United Nations with regard to facilitating and clarifying the procedures for granting entry visas to staff members of international organizations active in Syria who have United Nations travel documents and wish to enter the country on contracts with those organizations or for temporary work visits. By memorandum of 3 March 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates informed the office of the Resident Coordinator of the new procedures.

It should be noted that the figures previously provided to the Security Council on entry visas that had not been approved are inaccurate. The Syrian Government has issued over 400 entry visas since it began collaborating with the United Nations on relief efforts; only 12 visa applications remain pending. Using the new mechanism, efforts are being made to expedite the issuance of entry visas to Safety and Security personnel.

3. Streamlining of procedures to facilitate humanitarian convoys

The competent Syrian authorities, the Resident Coordinator and the representatives of international organizations are discussing ways to adopt a new

mechanism to simplify procedures to facilitate humanitarian convoys and ensure their smooth passage through military checkpoints. A new mechanism has been adopted for that purpose, but there have been some gaps in implementation. The joint Government-United Nations team further discussed the mechanism on 17 March 2014 and explored possible alternatives.

4. International non-governmental organizations

The Syrian Government has taken the necessary steps to facilitate the humanitarian work of international non-governmental organizations, including by allowing site visits to projects carried out in the Syrian governorates in cooperation with Government authorities. International non-governmental organizations have signed memorandums of understanding with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and, in some cases, with the ministries responsible for their area of activity. There are currently 18 international non-governmental organizations active in Syria, and the Government is facilitating their work. At the same time, Syria stresses that they must abide by the memorandums of understanding that they have concluded, which govern their work inside the country.

5. Civil society associations and domestic non-governmental organizations

The Ministry of Social Affairs has approved a list of 137 civil society associations and domestic non-governmental organizations that can cooperate with United Nations humanitarian organizations to meet the humanitarian needs of all Syrian governorates. The Syrian Government is working to periodically expand the base of domestic civil society associations that have the capacity to cooperate with the United Nations in this area.

V. Protection of civilians

Since the Syrian crisis began, armed terrorist groups have been terrorizing innocent civilians by committing the most heinous crimes, including beheadings; consuming human hearts, livers and skin in public places; carrying out public executions; raping women and children; targeting residential areas and civilian homes, schools and hospitals with car bombs and indiscriminate daily shellfire in a number of governorates, particularly Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Ladhiqiyah; and destroying infrastructure and service facilities. The Syrian Government wrote to the Security Council in August 2013 listing 225 crimes of rape committed by the armed terrorist groups against Syrian women. It wrote a second letter in September 2013 regarding the suffering of women as a result of the fatwa on "sexual jihad". It sent two identical letters on crimes against children in November 2013. The letters gave documented details of violations committed against children, including child recruitment, killing, mutilation, sexual violence, targeting of schools and hospitals, and detention in exchange for monetary ransom or to pressure families to change their position. An additional report on the armed terrorist groups' crimes against children was sent in February 2014.

In fulfilling its constitutional duty to protect citizens from the criminal actions of armed terrorist groups, the Syrian State has assiduously strived to ensure that civilians are not affected by the military operations that are taking place in certain parts of the country. In cooperation with the United Nations and the International

Committee of the Red Cross, the Government seeks to evacuate civilians, whom armed terrorist groups are using as human shields, from hot spots. For example, working in cooperation with the United Nations, the Government was able to evacuate hundreds of civilians from the old city of Homs in March 2014. In November 2013, it worked with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to evacuate civilians from Mu'addamiyah. On 12 March 2014, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent established centres to provide assistance and vital services to some 1,980 civilians who had been evacuated from the area of Husn (Krak) in Rif Homs.

VI. Attacks on hospitals, schools and other civilian facilities

1. Schools

In several of its reports, the United Nations noted that it had received reports that schools in many parts of Syria were being used for military purposes. However it also said that it had not received any specific information to confirm those reports. After writing to the Ministry of Education and other relevant Government agencies, the Organization was informed that armed terrorist groups were using schools in the areas in which they operated as training, torture and detention centres. The terrorists were also using the schools to store munitions and as bomb-making facilities, particularly vocational secondary schools. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates stands ready to cooperate with United Nations organizations operating in Syria in the investigation of these accounts, it wishes to stress that the Organization's reports should be based on documented and credible information (see annex for a list of the schools that, according to the reports of the Ministry of Education, have been vandalized or used for illicit purposes in the areas in which armed terrorist groups are present).

2. Hospitals

From the start of the events in Syria, armed terrorist group have systematically targeted the health sector, with a view to rendering the State incapable of providing essential services to Syrian citizens. Terrorist attacks have resulted in the destruction of 64 hospitals, 471 health centres and 412 ambulances. Armed terrorist groups have also occupied 32 hospitals in various parts of Syria and taken over 154 health centres (see annex for a list of targeted hospitals and health centres). For example, on 26 November 2013, a horrific massacre was committed at Dayr Atiyah Hospital in Rif Dimashq. The hospital's entire medical staff, including doctors and other health workers, were killed. Such crimes and the targeting of the health sector have made it necessary to use the military to protect some of these facilities against attacks by armed terrorist groups.

3. Infrastructure

As part of their systematic campaign of destruction, armed terrorist groups have been targeting the country's infrastructure in order to deprive civilians of vital services on which they rely. The terrorists have targeted electrical power stations, oil and gas pipelines, water treatment stations, grain silos, the road network, bridges, railways, telephone lines and pharmaceutical factories, causing material damage that is estimated to amount to billions of Syrian pounds.

4. Cultural legacy and historical sites

Armed terrorist groups have systematically destroyed and plundered several historical sites and monuments in Syria and converted them into military facilities. Moreover, they have carried out unauthorized excavation, causing great damage to Syria's cultural and human heritage and its people's history and cultural identity. The terrorists' crimes include the burning of the old market of Aleppo (the oldest market in the world), the Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo and many mosques, churches and monasteries in various Syrian cities. These groups, which espouse fundamentalist and takfirist ideology, did not even spare the statues of Syrian writers and scholars. They decapitated the statue of the famous Arab poet Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, Idlib governorate, and vandalized and destroyed the shrines of some saints and the companions of the Prophet. Such conduct is reminiscent of the destruction by the Taliban of statues of the Buddha and the vandalization and destruction of saints' shrines in Mali. The Syrian Government has called on the relevant United Nations organizations to put pressure on those States that support the terrorist groups to halt their repeated attacks against Syria's historical legacy, and to put pressure on neighbouring States to control their borders and halt the illicit transboundary trade in looted Syrian artefacts.

VII.

The Syrian Government is taking action to address cases involving the arrest of a number of local United Nations staff members. It emphasizes, however, that staff members must abide by their professional code of conduct and the laws of the country. On 20 March 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates provided the office of the Resident Coordinator with relevant information, some of it regarding cases in which local staff members had been tried by the competent judicial authorities because they had perpetrated, supported or facilitated terrorist crimes in Syria.

VIII. Provision of medical services

1. Child vaccinations

Syria has made significant progress in protecting children from various diseases and providing them with health care. Numerous diseases were non-existent before the crisis; polio, for example, had been eradicated in 1996. However, according to analysis by the World Health Organization, a polio virus strain that originated outside the country has now spread through certain areas of Syria. It has been shown conclusively that the virus was introduced by terrorists coming from abroad.

Despite many challenges, the Syrian Government continues to fulfil its duty to vaccinate children in all parts of the country, especially against polio, including in areas where armed terrorist groups are active. To that end, the Government has cooperated with specialized United Nations entities and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to implement several monthly polio vaccination campaigns. The first, which took place in December 2013, successfully vaccinated over 2.5 million children, and approximately 2,873,000 children have been vaccinated in March 2014. These national campaigns are set to continue. The Syrian Government has decided that, in the areas it reaches, it will also provide milk to children being vaccinated.

2. Ensuring access to health care

Despite the difficulties resulting from terrorist attacks on health-care centres, the Syrian Government has consistently fulfilled its duty to provide Syrian citizens across the country with health care, including in problematic areas. It dispatches mobile clinics and provides medical facilities with the necessary supplies, including refrigeration equipment, vaccines and medicines. The Government has continued to pay health-care workers' wages in all areas, including those infiltrated by terrorist groups, and has trained volunteers to provide health-care services to the local inhabitants.

The Syrian Government has been striving to ensure that citizens everywhere receive medical and health-care services. When providing medical supplies, the United Nations must coordinate with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the supplies reach those truly in need, and are not stolen by armed terrorist groups in certain areas in order to treat their wounded. The Syrian Government is considering alternative ways to successfully deliver medical aid to civilians, as it has noticed that certain United Nations entities have used convoys to deliver medical equipment intended for specialist medical facilities to areas where no such facilities exist, thereby making it likely that the equipment will be seized by armed men and terrorists. The United Nations humanitarian aid convoy to Mu'addamiyah on 19 March 2014 included a wide range of medicines and medical supplies in huge quantities, even though it was unclear which medical facility in Mu'addamiyah would be able to use them.

IX. Concluding observations

1. Armed terrorist groups are present in many parts of Syria. They have attacked infrastructure and Government service providers, blocked major roads to disrupt civilians' movements, denied civilians their basic need and used them as human shields. The result has been a deep and worsening humanitarian crisis. The Syrian Government welcomes the fact that the Security Council has recognized the connection and, in resolution 2139 (2014), has affirmed the importance of combating and eradicating terrorism. The Syrian Government emphasizes that its authorities continue to fulfil their Constitutional duty to protect Syrian citizens from armed terrorist groups, while also striving to ensure that military operations to not affect civilians.

2. By ending their support for armed terrorist groups, State sponsors of terrorism would make it possible to address the root causes of the humanitarian crisis in many parts of Syria. Although certain States invoke their concern for the lives of Syrians and the importance of meeting Syrians' basic needs, they bear responsibility: first, for the crimes of the armed terrorist groups, for which they provide funds, arms, training and shelter, and second, for imposing the unilateral coercive measures that are worsening Syrians' living conditions and impairing their ability to meet their basic needs, including food and medicine. As if that were not enough, those States are shirking their commitment to provide the necessary funding for the Syria Crisis Humanitarian Response Plan, which was endorsed by the United Nations in cooperation with the Syrian Government. Indeed, only 9 per cent of the Plan has been funded at the time of writing.

3. The Syrian Government has recently adopted a series of measures to allow the United Nations to expand its humanitarian activities. However, there has been a lack of genuine coordination with the Government to determine response priorities,

effective needs, type of aid required and access routes. This has caused chaos, waste and numerous gaps that require earnest attention. The Syrian Government therefore emphasizes that the joint Government-United Nations team must realistically evaluate and jointly plan humanitarian aid convoys by identifying needs and the types of aid required, supervising aid distribution and ensuring transparency, responsibility and credibility in order to avoid chaos, waste and looting or theft by armed terrorist groups.

4. If efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance to all areas of Syria are to prove successful, they must be based on the guidelines regulating the emergency assistance of the United Nations as set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182, particularly the principles of neutrality, impartiality, non-politicization of humanitarian work and respect for national sovereignty. Aid has not been delivered to certain areas besieged by armed groups, such as Nubul and Zahra in the Aleppo countryside. Instead, the focus has been on delivering aid to areas in which armed terrorist groups prevail, including areas where there are no civilians. This situation undoubtedly calls into question the true aims of the politicized approach adopted by certain donor States, which are intent on inflaming the Syrian crisis, and by certain international officials.

5. Syria emphasizes that the humanitarian situation must not be used for political gain, whether by citing unverified estimates to provide inflated figures of persons in need, displaced, killed and injured in Syria, or by delivering statements in New York and certain capitals and taking action at the United Nations to exploit the suffering of Syrians and serve the agendas of certain States that are involved in the Syrian crisis. Conversely, the United Nations and its entities active in Syria have reported on the scale their humanitarian operations and aid delivery to many hot spots. Those figures clearly confirm the extent to which the Syrian Government has cooperated with the organizations. The World Food Programme distributes food aid to 3.7 million persons a month across Syria, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees brought aid to some four million people in 2013. Those facts refute certain statements, which are divorced from reality, that question the cooperation of the Syrian Government in order to mislead international public opinion and serve the agenda of armed terrorist groups and their State sponsors. The Syrian Government insists once again that the civilian character of refugee camps in neighbouring States must be preserved, and that the needs of Syrian refugees across the border must not be exploited for political purposes.

6. In its reports on the situation in Syria, the United Nations Secretariat continues to recycle certain biased and subjective international reports for specific political ends. Syria warns of the consequences of that approach. United Nations reports on the humanitarian situation in Syria must be based on objective realities on the ground and on the United Nations country team reports. They should avoid making politicized accusations that violate international humanitarian law and human rights. The Organization must act in accordance with the United Nations resolutions that govern its work, instead of relying unilateral legal arguments.

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 70 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic
to the United Nations

Annex to the identical letters dated 24 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Educational institutions vandalized and used for illicit purposes by armed terrorist groups

Governorate	*Number*
Damascus	72
Rif Dimashq	68
Dar'a	5
Qunaytirah	196
Aleppo	2 527
Homs	85
Hama	84
Idlib	76
Raqqah	33
Hasakah	31
Dayr al-Zawr	30
Ladhiqiyah	102
Total	**3 309**

Hospitals and health-care centres vandalized and rendered inactive by armed terrorist groups

Governorate	*Hospitals*	*Health-care centres*
Damascus	–	12
Rif Dimashq	6	52
Dar'a	3	37
Qunaytirah	–	19
Aleppo	6	49
Homs	2	2
Hama	1	1
Idlib	1	–
Raqqah	5	58
Hasakah	1	2
Dayr al-Zawr	7	22
Ladhiqiyah	–	8
Total	**32**	**262**